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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 DAKAR 001821

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STATE FOR AF/W, AF/RSA, INR/AA

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TAGS: [KDEM](#) [KISL](#) [PGOV](#) [PHUM](#) [PINR](#) [PREL](#) [SOCI](#) [SG](#)

SUBJECT: IDRISSE SECK - THE RETURN OF THE PRODIGAL SON?

REF: A. DAKAR 1816

Classified By: CLASSIFIED BY POLITICAL OFFICER OSMAN N. TAT FOR REASONS
1.4 (B) AND (D).

Summary

1. (C) On July 25 a meeting took place between representatives of former Prime Minister Idrissa Seck and President Wade to explore ways for Seck to return to the Democratic Party of Senegal (PDS) or a reconstituted & Liberal Movement.⁸ Since then, negotiations between the two parties have continued both in and out of Senegal as Seck remains in a self-imposed exile in France. Seck's potential return to the fold may further inflame the fierce succession battle that is already taking place with the PDS. End Summary.

2. (C) On July 26, the press widely reported on President Wade's meeting with Seck's Rewmi party to discuss how Seck might return to the PDS or a larger new party. Reports indicated that Wade set no preconditions for this return and in a post-meeting press statement Wade blamed Rewmi Secretary General Omar Sarr, Seck's eminence grise, for souring relations between him and Seck. Political observers indicated that this statement is intended to make it look to people like the problems between Wade and Seck were the results of a misunderstanding created by their underlings as opposed to the reality that Wade ousted him and then proceeded to have him prosecuted for allegedly embezzling state funds intended for public works in Thies.

Why Now?

3. (SBU) Part of the organization of his succession requires that Wade pacify his relationship with his former Prime Minister, who is the second most popular political leader in the country after Wade. Seck has already proved that he will fight fiercely to succeed Wade and his 15 percent showing in February's Presidential election makes him a force to be reckoned with. Seck is a threat to Wade and the President is employing a strategy of keeping his enemies/challengers close to him, because he knows Seck's inclusion in the opposition gives it a lot of weight. So far, members of Seck's Rewmi have already distanced themselves from opposition parties grouped under the Front Siggil Senegal and even voted for PDS candidates in the August 19 Senatorials. However, it is not yet clear how Wade will choose to bring Seck back into the fold. He will risk visceral opposition from some key PDS leaders, possibly including his son, Karim, whose political ambitions are becoming more apparent.

4. (C) &He's scared,⁸ said Samba Bathily, a former PDS Deputy at the National Assembly who broke with Wade to join Seck's Rewmi, &He knows that his lax style of economic management would not stand up to an audit and would create

problems for him and his family.⁸ Another one of Seck,s closest advisers, Yankhoba Diattara - whom Wade had jailed and then pardoned, opined that even if Wade is trying to entrap Seck to further weaken him, the current political realities of a weak economy and in-fighting within the PDS is forcing Wade to make a bold move. He went on to say that Wade knows that Seck is the only force that could hold the PDS together and that the strong showing he made during the Presidential election underlined his popularity. The reasons why Karim Wade would be unable to stop the disintegration of the party is that he has no historical legitimacy within the PDS or political base and PDS stalwarts would much rather back a known entity like Seck than Karim, who would bring in a new crew. Further, many PDS members acknowledge that Seck had a major role to play in the rise of Wade and do see him as his historical heir. Both Diattara and Bhatily emphasized that there were no real problems between Seck and Karim and that a potential deal could involve Seck becoming President for two terms after which he would cede his place to Karim. This would give Karim time to develop as a politician and guarantee Wade,s family immunity after his departure.

The Peacemaker

15. (C) A potential upshot for Seck is that he can also look like the savior of Senegalese democracy as the go-between for Wade and the Front Siggil Senegal. So far Wade has refused to meet with the country,s main opposition parties and it is unlikely that he will capitulate to their demands. However, with Seck as an intermediary, he can save face and Seck will look like the man who solved the impasse between the government and the opposition thus paving the way for his successful re-entry into the political fray.

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Comment

16. (C) While negotiations continue between Wade and Seck it is difficult to prognosticate what will happen. However, having already served as Prime Minister and Secretary General of the PDS, it is unlikely that Seck would accept any position that would not give him a clear run at the Presidency. As Bhatily pointed out, Seck did well enough in the Presidential elections that he can wait Wade out.

15. (U) Visit Embassy Dakar,s SIPRNET website at <http://www.state.gov/p/af/dakar>.
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